

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed November 29, 2007, and the Advisory Action mailed March 20, 2008, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. Claims 1-7 were previously pending in this application. Claim 1 has been amended herein for clarity. As a result, claims 1-7 remain pending for examination with claim 1 being the sole independent claims. No new matter has been added.

Summary of Telephone Interview

Applicants' representatives appreciate the courtesies extended by Examiner Mitchell in granting a telephone interview on April 16, 2008. The substance of the interview is summarized herein.

During the telephone interview, the "thickness" limitation of claim 1 was discussed with respect to Sahara et al. Applicants' representatives inquired as to how the Examiner was interpreting region 22 of Sahara et al. to have a smaller thickness than regions 23 and 25 of Sahara. Examiner Mitchell explained that he was interpreting the term "thickness" to cover the portion of region 22 within the depression that extends above the top of insulating layer 14. Thus, the "thickness" that is relied upon extends only partially through the film 22. Applicants' representatives proposed amending claim 1 to clarify that the term "thickness" refers to the entire thickness of the contact pads. In addition, FIGS. 2 and 3 of Applicants' specification were also discussed.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

The Office Action rejected independent claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being purportedly anticipated by Sahara et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2002/0063340 A1). Applicants respectfully request reconsideration.

1. Discussion of Sahara et al.

Sahara describes a technique for wafer-level packaging to reduce the resistance and propagation delay along the signal paths. Sahara's technique includes the formation of an external electrode immediately above an (internal) element electrode so that these electrodes do not need to be connected to one another by a long wire, thus reducing the resistance. (¶ 14). FIGS. 3 and 4 of Sahara illustrate steps in the formation of such a structure. To connect the electrodes to one another, an opening 14a is formed above element electrode 11. Thin metal layer 15 and thick metal layer 16 are formed such that they cover the opening 14a as regions 21, 22. Layer 16 is a thick metal layer made of Cu that can be formed by electroplating, resulting in regions 22-25. (¶ 65, FIGS. 4A-4D). As shown in FIG. 4B of Sahara, regions 22 of layer 16 are formed over opening 14a, such that region 22 conforms to the shape of the opening 14a and a depression is formed in the top of region 22. However, since region 22 is formed by the same Cu electroplating step as regions 23, 24, and 25, the actual thickness of each of these regions should be the same. Region 22 differs from regions 23, 24 and 25 in that it conforms to the shape of region 14a. However, Sahara makes no mention that region 22 has a different thickness from regions 23, 24 and 25.

2. The Claims Distinguish Over Sahara

By contrast, claim 1 as amended recites, *inter alia*, an integrated circuit comprising one or several metallization levels, metal conductive strips and metal contact pads being formed on a last metallization level, wherein an entire thickness of the metal contact pads, at least at a level of their portions not covered by the passivation layer, is smaller than the thickness of said conductive strips. Sahara does not teach or suggest metal contact pads having an entire thickness that is smaller than the thickness of conductive strips. Therefore, claim 1 patentably distinguishes over Sahara. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and are therefore patentable for at least the same reasons.

CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, the Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees filed, asserted to be filed or which should have been filed herewith to our Deposit Account No. 23/2825, under Docket No.

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Respectfully submitted,

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